



The Old Ironsides Report



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1/35 Armor tanks patrol Baghdad's streets

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BAGHDAD, Iraq – At the core of the 1st Armored Division's fighting force is the M1A1 Abrams tank and the soldiers who operate it.

Soldiers from A Company, Task Force 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, man the M1A1 with pride, and have put the tanks out on the streets of central Baghdad to inspire courage in our allies, and fear in our enemies.

Capt. William T. Cundy, A Company commander, often accompanies his soldiers out regularly on evening patrols in the Abrams tanks through Zawra Park, Zawra Zoo and Ceremony Square in the Al Kindi and Al Harihiya districts of central Baghdad.

A Company's area of responsibility houses 15,000-25,000 people, as well as several historical monuments and important Iraqi cultural sites.

"All the parades that Saddam used to do came under the 'Arches of Victory' and through Ceremony Square," said Cundy. "This is one of the main historical areas for the Iraqi people, and it is our job to make sure it stays in pristine condition."

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, an amphitheatre-shaped structure located on the park grounds, commemorates the Iraqi soldiers who lost their lives in battle, said Cundy. The Arches of Victory, two massive sabers held by the hands of Saddam, stand above the helmets of fallen Iranian soldiers – those killed in battle against the Iraqi army.

Cundy and his team said they enjoy patrolling the streets and monument grounds in their Abrams tanks because it gives them an opportunity to get out and see Baghdad's people and its history.

"99.9% of the Iraqi people want safety and security, and want their children to have a better life than they have," Cundy said. "Unfortunately, there is that .1% that wants to cause trouble. Fortunately, however, there have been no problems in the park district."

As the tanks rumble down the city streets at speeds slow enough to allow a few seconds of eye contact with pedestrians, the soldiers are met with a sea of stares. Even if the M1A1 were good for nothing else, it would still make one heck of a head-turner.

The stares soon turned to smiles as the soldiers waved to the seemingly hypnotized people on the street seven feet below them. They people eagerly wave back and smile.



Capt. William Cundy, tank commander, left, Sgt. Jermaine Brooks, gunner, from A Company, Task Force 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, roll through on patrol under the Arches of Victory at Zawra Park in central Baghdad Nov. 14. A Company is tasked with guarding several historical sites and monuments in the city.

"It is definitely an attention getter," said 2nd Lt. Sean Lyons, fire support officer for A Company. "We patrol to let the people know that we are here making their homes and neighborhoods safe. They can see us and they can see the M1A1."

According to Spc. Brian Witt, gunner on tank "Aloha," the Abrams' purpose is understood as a strong deterrent to any would-be attackers.

"We do not use the tanks really often," Witt said. "Only if there is a riot or major disturbance do we roll out. At this point, people do not really pay attention to Humvees."

With a menacing growl, gargantuan mass and the firepower to back it up, the Abrams is definitely a crowd pleaser in A Company. Cundy said that his soldiers know their tanks "through and through" and are proud to be able to ensure a secure future for the priceless monuments and landmarks, as well as the people, of Baghdad from behind the turret of the M1A1.

"The M1A1 Abrams is the premier battle tank in the world, and the American soldiers are the best trained, best equipped troops in the world," Cundy said. "We are here to maintain a peaceful and stable Iraq, and if anyone wants to challenge that, my soldiers are always ready."

News

About a Dozen Detained in Turkey Blasts

Anti-terrorism police detained more suspects Friday and are now holding about a dozen people in a spate of suicide bombings blamed on al-Qaida that claimed 54 lives. An intelligence report presented to authorities said some Islamic radicals who fought in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Bosnia may have returned to Turkey to work with militant groups.

Detective: Malvo Laughed About Shootings

A cocky Lee Boyd Malvo laughed repeatedly during a police interrogation as he recounted some of last year's sniper attacks, saying of one victim, "He was hit good. Dead immediately," a detective testified at Malvo's murder trial Friday.

Opponents Block Energy Bill in Senate

Senate opponents blocked Congress from finishing its energy bill Friday, dealing a severe setback to President Bush's proposal to redirect the nation's energy agenda toward more production of oil, gas, coal and corn-based ethanol.

FBI bullet analyses flawed, imprecise

In a finding that could affect thousands of criminal cases, the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that some techniques the FBI has used for decades to match bullets to crimes are flawed or imprecise.

The study, expected to be released in the next few weeks, makes about a half-dozen recommendations to improve the FBI lab's science used to match bullets through their lead content.

GOP, Dems differ on drug savings

The Bush administration says an elderly American who now pays \$3,600 a year for prescription drugs would have annual drug spending cut by 60 percent under the Medicare bill. Democrats looking at the GOP-backed bill say that same Medicare beneficiary still would be expected to cover 70 percent of annual drug costs.

Safety Tip:

REMEMBER: WEAPONS STATUS RED FOR M9 AND M16 MEANS:

- MAGAZINE IN WEAPON
- ROUND CHAMBERED
- WEAPON ON SAFE

ONLY PLACE YOUR FINGER ON THE TRIGGER WHEN YOU ARE ACTUALLY GOING TO FIRE THE WEAPON

Sports

Oilers, Canadiens and 55,000 fans set to face elements

EDMONTON, Alberta (AP) -- For the Edmonton Oilers and Montreal Canadiens, their game Saturday will be just like old times -- a throwback to when the players were kids and raced from school to a frozen pond.

And they never cared how cold it was.

So, with no concern for the thermometer, the league is throwing an 86th birthday party for the NHL. The Oilers and Canadiens will play at 55,000-seat Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, the first outdoor game in league history.

The Heritage Classic will be the second half of a hockey doubleheader with teams of Edmonton and Montreal alumni, including Hall of Famers Wayne Gretzky and Guy Lafleur, playing the first game.

Forecasts Friday called for a temperature of about 15 degrees with possible snow flurries when the puck drops at 5 p.m. local time, two hours after the alumni game starts.

The first practice Friday looked like a pickup game, with players in wool caps passing and shooting with the enthusiasm of kids.

The event is a sellout and Oilers officials said they could have sold 500,000 tickets priced from \$45 to \$101.

Workers spent two weeks building the regulation-size rink with ice 2 inches thick in a stadium that normally hosts football and other events, such as the 2001 world track and field championships.

League officials say the NHL game could be postponed if the weather turns bad. The old-timers' game will take place, no matter the weather, and that's fine with them.

While it will be the first outdoor NHL game, other hockey games have drawn larger crowds. In October 2001, Michigan State and Michigan played to a 3-3 tie before 74,554 on an outdoor rink at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing, Mich., to set a world attendance record for hockey.

That broke the mark of 55,000 at Moscow's Lenin Stadium for a 1957 world championship game between the Soviet Union and Sweden.

Chaplain's thought for the day

Potential

I don't think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains. --Anne Frank

We don't find the rewards of today by searching through what we consider our failures. Pausing to seek out something good for everything we find bad is a step in the right direction. We may find that our successes out way our failures.

But how much more chance we will have of living a happy day if we skip over our setbacks and concentrate as much as we can on what is going well. It is smarter to look for diamonds in a diamond mine than in a garbage dump.

Let us discard our failures, using only what we have learned from them to achieve success.

Certainly God does not see us as a failures but rather God sees our potential. Or as we would say in the Army be all you can be.